

September 24, 1985

To the Editor
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036

D Dr. Armand Hammer's suggestion (Op. Ed., September 22, 1985) that the US share with the Soviet Union research and development on the Space Defense Initiative is intriguing. I have the greatest respect for my friend Dr. Hammer's wisdom and political insight. The difficulty, however, concerns the nature of the Space Defense Initiative itself.

Many scientists believe that the chance of the SDI program to succeed at the technical level are vanishingly small. Moreover, much of the so-called SDI research appears to be irrelevant to its stated purpose.

There is a widespread feeling among university scientists that the SDI research program has another, more sinister effect, namely to tie physical and engineering research to the military establishment for one or several decades to come.

Washington bureaucrats disposing of enormous sums (over four billion dollars in the next two years, almost double the total NSF funds) are believed to be soliciting proposals for miscellaneous research projects, even totally irrelevant ones, which are then approved without peer review or serious critical scrutiny -- like the \$600 toilet seats for the Air Force.

The corruption and undermining of American science and technology that may result from such practices can be a greater threat to our future than abandonment of the utopian space-based defense.

S.E. Luria, M.D.
Institute Professor (Emeritus)